

Message Text

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67

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 AID-05 PC-01 OMB-01 OPR-02

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SCCT-01 SY-05 SSO-00 /067 W

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P R 142035Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 622

INFO USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE TEGUCIGALPA 3022

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, HO

SUBJECT: CHURCH DECLARATION

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 2970

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE CHURCH ISSUED ANOTHER STRONGLY WORDED LETTER CONDEMNING ABUSE OF RELIGIOUS PERSONNEL AND DEMANDING AN INVESTIGATION OF THE WHEREABOUTS OF TWO PRIESTS AND TWO WOMEN. AN AP STORY QUOTES ARCHBISHOP SANTOS AS SAYING THAT "THE TWO PRIESTS HAVE BEEN MURDERED". THE COMMITTEE OF HIGH RANKING MILITARY OFFICERS CHOSEN TO INVESTIGATE THE OLANCHO SITUATION WILL SOON GIVE A REPORT TO THE CHIEF OF STATE. EMBASSY SOURCES IN THE MILITARY HAVE VOICED A DETERMINATION TO DISCOVER THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED EVEN THOUGH IT WILL CREATE DIFFICULTIES FOR THE GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE CATHOLIC HIERARCHY SENT A LETTER TO CHIEF OF STATE

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MELGAR AND THE SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL THAT APPEARED IN THE WEEK END PRESS. THE MAIN POINTS OF THE LETTER FOLLOW:

(A) PROTESTS THE ABUSE OF RELIGIOUS PERSONNEL IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY AND THE OCCUPYING OF CHURCH PROPERTY;

(B) DEMANDS AN EXHAUSTIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE WHEREABOUTS OF FATHER CASIMIRO, FATHER BETANCOURT, MARIA ELENA BOLIVAR AND RUTH GARCIA. IF THEY HAVE BEEN KILLED THOSE RESPONSIBLE SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO TRIAL AND PUNISHED;

(C) DEMANDS THE TRIAL AND PUNISHMENT FOR THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INCIDENTS IN JUTICALPA;

(D) REQUESTS THE REMOVAL OF TROOPS FROM CHURCH PROPERTY, THE RETURN OF RELIGIOUS PERSONNEL TO OLANCHO AND AN END TO ARBITRARY ARRESTS;

(E) CONDEMNS THE CLIMATE OF TERROR IN OLANCHO CAUSED BY ACTIONS OF LANDOWNERS, CATTLEMEN AND SOME MILITARY PERSONNEL;

(F) DEMANDS THE PRESENTATION OF PROOF BY THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT AGAINST RELIGIOUS PERSONNEL WHO HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES;

(G) REQUESTS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM TO HELP THE HONDURAN PEOPLE; AND

(H) REITERATES ITS DEMAND THAT THE CHURCH BE LEFT IN PEACE TO CARRY OUT ITS MISSION.

2. AN AP STORY PUBLISHED IN LA PRENSA ON JULY 12 QUOTES MONSIGNOR SANTOS, ARCHBISHOP OF TEGUCIGALPA, AS SAYING IN RELATION TO FATHERS CASIMIRO AND BETANCOURT "THAT THOSE PRIESTS HAVE BEEN MURDERED". HE REPORTEDLY STATED THAT "WE HAVE STARTED TO PRAY FOR THEIR SOULS AND PRAY THAT THE BLOOD THEY HAVE SHED WILL HELP TO REDEEM THIS COUNTRY". THE STORY CONCLUDED BY QUOTING HIM SAYING THAT "I HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE SINCERITY OF THE GOVERNMENT" IN INVESTIGATING THE SITUATION.

3. COMMENT: THE CHURCH LETTER WAS ONLY THE LAST IN A SERIES OF STRONGLY WORDED PROTESTS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS REACTED TO THIS CRITICISM BY JAILING TWO CIVILIANS AND THREE MILITARY PERSONNEL SUPPOSEDLY INVOLVED IN THE OLANCHO INCIDENTS. FURTHERMORE, A "BLUE RIBBON" COMMITTEE COMPRISED OF HIGH RANKING OFFICERS HAS BEEN INVESTIGATING THE SITUATION IN OLANCHO. WE UNDERSTAND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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THEY THEY WILL SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE CHIEF OF STATE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. OUR CONTACTS IN THE MILITARY HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY ARE DETERMINED TO DISCOVER THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED EVEN THOUGH IT WILL CREATE MANY DIFFICULTIES FOR THE GOVERNMENT.
SANCHEZ

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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SAN JOSE
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